UNITED
NATIONS

E

Economic and Social Council

Distr.
GENERAL

E/CN.17/1996/26
11 April 1996

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
Fourth session
18 April-3 May 1996
Item 6 (c) of the provisional agenda*

REVIEW OF SECTORAL CLUSTERS: PROGRESS REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF DECISIONS MADE BY THE COMMISSION AT ITS SECOND AND THIRD SESSIONS

Progress in the implementation of the decisions and recommendations made by the Commission at its third session

Report of the Secretary-General

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INTRODUCTION

1. The Commission on Sustainable Development, at its second session, requested the Secretary-General to keep it informed of the action taken and progress achieved in the implementation of the decisions and recommendations taken at its previous sessions.

2. The present report focuses on sectoral clusters of Agenda 21 1/ that were reviewed by the Commission, at its third session, in 1995, 2/ namely:

(a) Integrated approach to the planning and management of land resources;

(b) Combating deforestation;

(c) Managing fragile ecosystems: combating desertification and drought;

(d) Managing fragile ecosystems: sustainable mountain development;

(e) Promoting sustainable agriculture and rural development;

(f) Conservation of biological diversity;

(g) Environmentally sound management of biotechnology.

This report has been prepared on the basis of inputs from entities within the United Nations system, acting as the task managers for their respective chapters of Agenda 21, specifically the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO). These inputs were drafted in consultation with other interested agencies and organizations. This report mainly addresses action taken so far at the international level. More detailed information and analysis of action taken and progress achieved at the national and other levels, as well as by major groups, will be presented within the context of the 1997 comprehensive review of the implementation of Agenda 21.

3. As for the thematic areas of Agenda 21 that were reviewed by the Commission during its second session 3/ - namely, health, human settlements and freshwater, and toxic chemicals and hazardous wastes - information on progress in the implementation of relevant decisions and recommendations of the Commission taken at that session was submitted to the third session of the Commission in 1995 in document E/CN.17/1995/22. That information will be updated in the context of the reports to be prepared for the above-mentioned 1997 review.

I. CHAPTER 10 OF AGENDA 21: INTEGRATED APPROACH TO THE PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT OF LAND RESOURCES

4. The report on chapter 10 of Agenda 21 for the third session of the Commission on Sustainable Development was prepared on the basis of the report of FAO as task manager. An International Workshop on an Integrated Approach to Planning and Management of Land: Operationalization of Chapter 10 of Agenda 21, held in Wageningen, the Netherlands, 20-22 February 1995 (see document

E/CN.17/1995/33), was convened by the Government of the Netherlands in collaboration with FAO as an additional input to the discussions of the Commission on Sustainable Development at its third session. A number of case-studies presented at the workshop are contained in a forthcoming joint publication to be issued by the Government of the Netherlands and FAO.

Convening of workshops and consultations

5. As a follow-up to the recommendations of the Commission on Sustainable Development at its second session, concerning chapter 18 of Agenda 21, and to the recommendations of the Commission at its third session, the Governments of Israel and Japan, in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the International Arid Land Consortium, convened in Israel an International Symposium on Sustainable Water Management in Arid and Semi-Arid Lands, from 15-19 May 1995. The Symposium dealt with issues related to water management in these areas and with the interrelationship between land and water management.

Guidelines for planning for the sustainable development of land resources

6. FAO, under a project funded by UNEP, organized in Rome in June 1995 a workshop to develop an improved approach to land management. The output of the workshop, in the form of a short information document entitled Our Land, Our Future, will be published by FAO in the near future. In addition, guidelines for a more detailed and comprehensive approach to planning for sustainable management of land resources were prepared by a group of consultants and discussed at an informal expert meeting organized by FAO in November 1995 in order to consider the draft guidelines. These guidelines will need to be amplified and upgraded in the light of further thinking and field experience. Other workshops for representatives of developing countries on related subjects have also been organized by the European Community, in Bologna, Italy, and by UNEP in Nairobi, Kenya, and Lima, Peru.

Action at the national level

7. A number of countries have expressed interest in the application and further development of the guidelines for a detailed and comprehensive approach to the planning for the sustainable management of land resources. A project for the application of the guidelines in Sierra Leone is in an advanced state of preparation and 25 other countries have expressed interest in the project.

Internationally acceptable approach to the classification of land use and land cover

8. A considerable programme has been built up to develop an internationally acceptable approach to the classification of land use and land cover in collaboration with UNEP, the Environmental Information Management Unit/Sustainable Development Department (SDDR) of FAO, the International Institute for Aerospace Survey and Sciences (ITC) (Netherlands), the Institute for Terrestrial Ecology (ITE) (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland), the World Conservation Monitoring Centre (WCMC) and Eurostat (Statistical Office of the European Communities). This involved a large contract with ITE that will lead to substantial outputs by early 1996, the

finalization of a land-use database and the development of a prototype land cover database by ITC, and valuable inputs into the FAO Africover project. At the same time, an informal information network was developed that now includes regular circular letters to several hundreds of correspondents, and discussion. The overall activity has led to useful progress in concept development and agreement among institutions. There is likely to be a follow-up to the present UNEP funding to support land use and cover classification. This may include workshops at the regional level. It is also hoped that the FAO Africover project will become a vehicle for further concept development and methodology dissemination.

II. CHAPTER 11 OF AGENDA 21: COMBATING DEFORESTATION

The IPF process

9. The Ad Hoc Intergovernmental Panel on Forests, created following the recommendation of the Commission on Sustainable Development at its third session, 4/ held its first session from 11 to 15 September 1995 in New York and its second session from 11 to 22 March 1996 in Geneva.

10. The progress report of the Ad Hoc Intergovernmental Panel on Forests is being submitted as a separate document to the Commission at its fourth session (document E/CN.17/1996/32). To facilitate cross references with the work of the Panel, progress under the Panel's various "issues for priority action" is reported below.

Progress under issue I: implementation of decisions of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development

11. In general, the progress reported to the Commission at its third session with regard to adjusting policies, legislation and institutions to achieve greater balance between environment and development and to adapt them to the implementation of Agenda 21 has continued. Pilot programmes to test or demonstrate sustainable forest management practice have continued. In developing countries in particular, national forest programmes have been critically reviewed and better adapted to the principles of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. In the current difficult economic climate, a regrettable aspect is the difficulty in mobilizing commitment, both domestic and international, for actions that combine development and environment goals.

12. Efforts to promote environmentally friendly harvesting (logging) have continued; the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO) and the FAO Model Codes of Harvesting Practice continue to serve as a basis for some specific codes. A possible regional harvesting code for all of Asia and the Pacific is among the issues of sustainable forest management slated to be considered by an ad hoc Working Group established by the Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission in January 1996.

13. Given the importance of forests for biological diversity, efforts continue to be made in the field of conservation of genetic resources in protected areas and forests. Preparations are under way for an international conference on

protected areas and sustainable rural development, possibly as a satellite meeting to the eleventh World Forestry Congress in Turkey (October 1997). As called for by the Commission on Sustainable Development at its third session, greater importance is being given by the Convention on Biological Diversity 5/ to forest issues, and FAO, the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources-World Conservation Union (IUCN), WCMC and the International Plant Genetic Resources Institute (IPGRI) are cooperating to promote in situ and ex situ conservation of forest genetic resources. FAO, in close collaboration with national institutes, is developing a worldwide information system on forest genetic resources with the objective of making available reliable and up-to-date information in this field, to be used for planning and decision-making and to underpin programmes at national, regional and global levels.

Progress under issue II: international cooperation; finance and technology

14. Statistics show that external funding in support of sustainable forest management and national forestry programmes is declining. It must be kept in mind, however, that forest-related activities as part of rural development or environment or resource management programmes may not be included in those statistics.

15. However, regional initiatives continue to strengthen inter-country cooperation in forestry, for example, those under the Amazon Cooperation Treaty, the Consejo Centroamericano de Bosques y Areas Protegidas (Central American Council of Forests and Protected Areas), the South Pacific Forum and the Ministerial Conferences on the Protection of Forests in Europe.

Progress under issue III: forest assessments, criteria and indicators, valuation

16. The country capacity-building programme coordinated by FAO has continued to receive donor support. Preparations are well advanced for the updating of global resource data in the year 2000; in line with the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, this future assessment will better cover both environment and productive potentials of forests.

17. On criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management, the Montreal and Helsinki processes continue, as does the initiative of the Amazon Cooperation Treaty as reflected in the Torapoto Statement of February 1995. In addition, progress has been made in involving countries that hitherto were largely bypassed by major initiatives. Meetings have been held or are planned on criteria and indicators of sustainable forest management (FAO/UNEP for dry-zone Africa, Nairobi, November 1995; for the Near East, Cairo, October 1996; and for Central America, late 1996); for the international contact group on criteria and indicators (Government of Finland, Helsinki, August 1996); and on sustainable forest management (FAO/ITTO for Asia, Bangkok, December 1995). The Centre for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) has been undertaking testing of field-level criteria and indicators both in temperate and in tropical countries.

18. Many countries and international organizations are involved in studies to develop improved valuation of the full range of forest goods and services and to better integrate forests into national accounts.

Progress under issue IV: trade and environment

19. Environmental pressure groups have sought to include many tropical timber species under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) restrictions, and a review process on this continues; certification systems accompanied by various forms of ecological labelling are being adopted by an increasing number of major timber exporting countries; and more agencies have been endorsed to carry out certification of forest products. Efforts continue to recycle a greater proportion of waste paper and other wood residues: this trend is being encouraged by policies and incentives fostered by the trade and environment dialogue.

Progress under issue V: international organizations and instruments

20. There have been no major changes in the mandates and activities of the major intergovernmental institutions involved in forestry. A greater commitment to cooperation has surfaced, however, and is reflected in the very close, even if informal, collaboration among most international agencies in providing support to the Ad Hoc Intergovernmental Panel on Forests process. Also, what has proved mutually beneficial and evolved into a normal modus operandi is the tripartite arrangement linking United Nations organizations with bilateral partnerships of developed and developing country Governments in order to sponsor United Nations Conference on Environment and Development-related dialogue initiatives.

Activities by major groups

21. Non-governmental organizations, particularly international environmental groups, continue to be very active in the international forest policy dialogue. A prominent non-governmental initiative has been the launching of the World Commission on Forests and Sustainable Development which has started a series of public regional hearings (the first in Jakarta, Indonesia, March 1996) on the agenda established by the Commission on Sustainable Development at its third session for the Ad Hoc Intergovernmental Panel on Forests. Some trade organizations, such as the Association technique internationale des bois tropicaux, are encouraging their members to become associated more extensively with ongoing initiatives. Furthermore, the commercial private sector, while not prominently involved in international dialogue, has adopted many self-enforced codes of environmental responsibility and best practice in forest management, forest products harvesting and processing, and pollution management.

III. CHAPTER 12 OF AGENDA 21: MANAGING FRAGILE ECOSYSTEMS: COMBATING DESERTIFICATION AND DROUGHT

United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa

22. The process surrounding the ratification and implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa, 6/ has remained high in the agenda since the Convention was adopted in June 1994. As regards furthering the Convention process and keeping its momentum alive, the seventh and eighth sessions of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for the Elaboration of an International Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa, took place in August 1995 and February 1996 respectively; at those sessions, administrative matters and funding mechanisms and scientific and technological cooperation, as well as the preparation for the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, were discussed. The total number of signatories to the Convention as of 27 March 1996 was 115, with 27 having ratified. It is hoped that the first session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention will take place in 1997.

Urgent action for Africa

23. In relation to resolution 5/1 on urgent action for Africa, adopted by the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee at its fifth session, 7/ consultations organized cooperatively have considered the implementation process for the Convention in all subregions. Aspects considered included funding, through national desertification funds, country-level division of labour, especially between government institutions and non-governmental organizations, and subregional and regional implementation strategies. National-level discussions have focused on desertification funds and national action programmes.

Other actions, other regions and division of labour

24. Countries in the other regions have also been planning activities for national, subregional and regional implementation of the Convention and establishing appropriate mechanisms. An ongoing campaign to raise awareness of the different parties on the Convention is the most prominent action taking place currently in various parts of the world led by the secretariat of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee. Planning meetings organized by the International Non-Governmental Organization Network on Desertification for Latin America and Asia and the high-level seminar on regional implementation for Governments in the Latin American region show the increased attention being paid to the Convention not only by technically oriented people but also by decision makers and affected groups (non-governmental organizations).

25. Non-governmental organizations and major groups have been increasingly involved in the planning stages of Convention implementation, at the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee, subregional and national levels, prior to implementation through community channels.

Information on desertification

26. The fact remains that knowledge and information on desertification are still inadequate and poorly distributed. In an attempt to ensure better use and awareness of existing scientific knowledge, preparations have begun for the publication of a revised Atlas of Desertification. An increased focus is also being placed on work to collect and disseminate knowledge of successful techniques of land management and coping strategies used by communities throughout drylands.

27. In terms of placing a greater focus on assessment and research related to dryland ecosystems, major multi-partner research initiatives have been started, for example, the Desert margins initiative (by the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR)) in sub-Saharan Africa and the interregional "People, land management and environmental change" project (by United Nations University). Both will form part of the scientific and technical cooperation on land degradation, as also required under the Convention. Studies on establishing the links between desertification and other environmental problems, for example, work on climate change and desertification involving carbon sequestration, are progressing.

IV. CHAPTER 13 OF AGENDA 21: MANAGING FRAGILE ECOSYSTEMS: SUSTAINABLE MOUNTAIN DEVELOPMENT

Convening of regional consultations

28. In accordance with the recommendation of the Commission on Sustainable Development related to chapter 13 of Agenda 21, according to which the Commission urged interested Governments and organizations, including the private sector, to promote initiatives aimed at raising awareness, including the convening of regional and intergovernmental consultations, 8/ FAO, in its role as task manager, has initiated, in cooperation with host countries and concerned organizations, the convening of several such meetings:

(a) In Asia: the regional intergovernmental consultation, entitled "Sustainable development of fragile mountain areas of Asia", was held in Kathmandu, Nepal, 13-15 December 1994;

(b) In Latin America: the regional intergovernmental consultation on sustainable mountain development took place in Lima, Peru, 8-11 August 1995;

(c) In Europe: the organizational processes began in 1995 for (i) the European intergovernmental consultation on sustainable mountain development, which is scheduled in two sessions for 1996, the first in Aviemore, Scotland, 23-26 April, and the second in Trento, Italy, during the week of 7 October and (ii) the European non-governmental organization consultation on sustainable mountain development, to be held in Toulouse, France, 4-6 July 1996;

(d) In Africa: the regional intergovernmental consultation on sustainable mountain development will be held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 3-7 June 1996.

New institutional arrangements at global and regional levels

29. Following the outcome of the Non-Governmental Organization Consultation on the Mountain Agenda, held in Lima, Peru, in February 1995, an Initial Organizing Committee meeting was held in West Virginia, United States of America, in September 1995 to establish the Mountain Forum, a network intended to include interested non-governmental organizations and governmental organizations, the purpose of which is to provide a forum for mutual support and the exchange of ideas and experiences among people with respect to raising mountain-related issues in local, national and international agendas and to promote policies and actions for equitable and ecologically sustainable mountain development. 9/

Guidelines for preparation of sustainable mountain development programmes

30. A broad-based collaborative effort is under way to develop a set of guidelines for sustainable development in mountain areas, focusing on national-level planning needs. This activity is based on work initiated by the task manager for chapter 13 of Agenda 21, involving the inter-agency network on mountains. The work is continuing in a fully collaborative manner, involving Governments, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations, with The Mountain Institute, in its current capacity as convener of the Interim Facilitating Committee of the Mountain Forum, having been designated to coordinate the formulation of guidelines. Existing guidelines for national-level planning in forestry, environment, conservation and other areas are being taken fully into account to avoid duplicating efforts where adequate planning tools already exist. This work is therefore intended to be complementary to existing guidelines by addressing planning needs specific to mountain development issues. Such effort is expected to facilitate formulation of comprehensive national and/or local mountain development programmes.

Action at national level

31. The regional intergovernmental consultations held for Asia and Latin America have served to reaffirm the commitment of the Governments of these regions to giving greater emphasis at the national level to the promotion of sustainable mountain development and the need to initiate new action in priority fields identified in both global and regional forums. Proposals have already been made at country level for project support aimed at strengthening institutional capacity to carry out mountain development; at assessing and monitoring the flow of resources to and from mountain areas; and at reducing poverty levels among mountain communities through income-generating activities.

Criteria and indicators of sustainable mountain development

32. FAO, as the task manager for chapter 13 of Agenda 21, has prepared a draft list of indicators for sustainable mountain development, within the framework of the programme on sustainable development indicators adopted by the Commission on Sustainable Development. Further work in this area is expected to include a wide range of inputs from other international organizations and Governments.

V. CHAPTER 14 OF AGENDA 21: PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Studies and guidelines

33. FAO has developed a draft outline for a study on the implications for sustainable agriculture and rural development (SARD) of the Final Act Embodying the Results of the Uruguay Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations 10/ at national, regional and international levels. Given the difficulty in locating well-qualified consultants for this task, the recognition of the cost considerations, and the existence of much material within FAO, work on the study will be undertaken by FAO staff in the first three to four months of 1996. The draft will be circulated to other interested agencies and institutions for their comments, with the aim of completing the report towards the end of the year.

34. The World Food Summit, to be held in November 1996, will have before it two technical reports addressing environmental issues within the context of food security: one on food production and environmental impact, and the other on lessons from the green revolution - towards a new green revolution.

Convening of conferences, workshops and consultations

35. In the area of integrated plant nutrition management, FAO and the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) held a Workshop on Plant Nutrition Management, Food Security and Sustainable Agriculture to 2020, on 16 and 17 May 1995, emphasizing the exploitation of local sources of fertilizer materials as well as the recycling of organic materials, as key parts of plant nutrition strategies of developing countries, particularly in Africa.

36. Following the decision of the Conference of FAO at its twenty-eighth session in November 1995 to broaden the mandate of the Commission on Plant Genetic Resources to encompass that of a Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, there will be a step-by-step process with animal genetic resources marking the first step towards an intergovernmentally broadened Commission to begin a programme of work on animal genetic resources.

37. In the areas of plant genetic resources, the year 1996 will mark the holding of the fourth International Technical Conference on Plant Genetic Resources (Leipzig, Germany, June 1996). Eleven subregional meetings have been held in recent months with the participation of 154 Governments and numerous non-governmental organizations and other institutions. Work is advanced on preparing the two main documents for the Conference: the report on the state of the world's plant genetic resources and the global plan of action.

38. In addition, FAO in collaboration with Winrock International, held an International Workshop on the Integration of SARD Issues in Agricultural Policy from 22 to 24 May 1995 at FAO headquarters, Rome, Italy. The workshop centred on a paper that (a) analysed agricultural policies and the planning process in relation to economic adjustment in developing countries; (b) discussed key issues in natural resource management and environmental protection for SARD in those countries and (c) based on these analyses, developed a methodological and operational framework for integrating environmental and sustainable development considerations into the mainstream of agricultural planning and policy analysis.

Other papers explored the conceptual or operational issues and implications for training. The proceedings of this Workshop will be published shortly.

Indicators for sustainable agriculture and rural development

39. Work has intensified in developing indicators for SARD. A set of 41 methodology sheets on how to calculate indicator values has been prepared for the land resources cluster of chapters of Agenda 21; of these, 13 are directly related to chapter 14. This exercise supports the work of the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development of the United Nations Secretariat on indicators and information for decision-making (chap. 40), as follow-up to the decision of the Commission on Sustainable Development at its third session on a work programme on indicators for sustainable development.

40. Several international meetings have been organized by the World Bank and FAO to develop land quality indicators (LQIs) that can be tested in selected field projects. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has finalized its eight agro-environmental indicators and will begin their selected testing in 1996. FAO organized a meeting in January 1996 to discuss issues related to developing integrated LQIs. Issues included analytical frameworks, data quality, user groups, data aggregation, scale of analysis and indicator selection. It is hoped that integrated sets of LQIs may be identified and that the conceptual frameworks within which they can be applied, including institutional and decision-making elements, may be further developed.

41. FAO is continuing its efforts to develop mechanisms for community control over natural resources, particularly in the area of pastoralism, community forestry and artisanal fisheries. Indicators of participatory management are being developed. There has been a recent specific initiative to design a FAO/non-governmental organization cooperation programme providing capacity-building support to rural people's organizations in sustainable agriculture and food security. The programme aims to help these organizations fill development roles that are becoming increasingly complex as a result of changes such as structural adjustment, liberalization of markets and decentralization of administration and of natural resource management.

Action at the national level

42. With regard to efforts to develop participatory mechanisms, a mission was mounted in late 1995 to visit various Sahelian rural people's organizations, with a focus on the Fédération des ONG sénégalaises (FONGS). A two-day debriefing workshop for this mission was held in Rome on 4 and 5 December 1995 to bring together the mission members, staff from FAO, other Rome-based United Nations bodies (the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the World Food Programme (WFP)), the European Union and the Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS), and representatives of Sahelian and European non-governmental organizations.

43. A similar FAO programme funded by Northern non-governmental organizations is under way in South Asia aimed at building the capacity of people's organizations, particularly those relating to women, so as to incorporate SARD

into their activities. A consultation is planned to be held in the spring of 1996 to exchange views and experiences.

44. With regard to the promotion of integrated pesticide management (IPM), FAO's field programme is continuing under a variety of funding initiatives and with a range of bilateral and multilateral partners. With an initial focus on rice in Asia, the programme is expanding to cover other crops such as cotton, vegetables, grain, legumes, bananas and citrus fruits, and other regions, under the guidance of the FAO/UNEP Panel of Experts on IPM. Another initiative has been the launching, since the third session of the Commission, of an IPM Facility between the World Bank and FAO, with UNEP and UNDP likely to join as partners in the Facility in the near future. The overall aim is to have more and higher-quality IPM investment projects.

45. FAO plans to launch a global initiative for the management of animal genetic resources in early 1996 having a country-based structure for designing, implementing and maintaining action plans or strategies on animal genetic resources with the direct involvement of Governments, together with a global information system (DAD-IS) that involves unique databases and other research and training modules.

VI. CHAPTER 15 OF AGENDA 21: CONSERVATION OF BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

46. The Convention on Biological Diversity is emerging as the principal mechanism for advancing the objectives of chapter 15 of Agenda 21 on conservation of biological diversity by using the ecosystem approach, strengthening its internal capacity to utilize the knowledge and expertise available worldwide and seeking to ensure that the conservation and sustainable use of biological resources are mainstreamed into current economic activities.

47. The Convention is now entering its second phase under which emphasis is shifting towards national implementation. This transition is illustrated by the practical nature of the decisions taken by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention at its second session, held in Jakarta, Indonesia, in November 1995 and their emphasis on policy guidance. The meeting adopted the Jakarta Mandate on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine and Coastal Biological Diversity which proposes a framework programme for global action. 11/

48. The Conference of the Parties to the Convention at its second session also invited UNEP, subject to the availability of funds, to liaise with the Commission on Sustainable Development in order to organize an open-ended ad hoc intergovernmental workshop on the study of the relationship between the Convention on Biological Diversity and other international conventions on related issues. Consultations are in progress between the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development of the United Nations Secretariat and UNEP regarding the modalities for convening such a meeting including dates, venue, provisional agenda and relevant documents.

49. The ecosystem-based approach was accompanied by the establishment of the clearing-house mechanism to promote technical and scientific cooperation. The adoption by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention of the main

proposals of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) which held its first meeting in Paris in September 1995 demonstrated the relevance and effectiveness of the current organs of the Convention. The Convention is evolving as a policy guidance body that seeks to promote action through existing institutions. This is illustrated by the focus of the decisions on framework programmes and guidance statements. The ability of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention to monitor the implementation of the Convention will be enhanced through the analysis of national reports submitted by parties from 1997 on and the periodic production of the Global Biodiversity Outlook (GBO).

50. To date, 143 States have ratified the Convention and are at various stages of implementation of its provisions (compared with 89 States in April 1995).

51. The secretariat of the Convention is working with relevant United Nations entities such as UNEP, FAO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), UNDP and the World Bank and international non-governmental organizations such as IUCN and World Wildlife Fund (WWF) in organizing training activities and regional meetings aimed at capacity-building and human resources development on the subject of biodiversity conservation and sustainable use.

52. The secretariat in collaboration with these bodies is exploring means for coordinating relevant global and regional agreements related to the Convention and establishing effective cooperation mechanisms. The coordination between the Convention and the FAO International Undertaking on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture and the work of the Ad Hoc Intergovernmental Panel on Forests are noteworthy in this regard. The secretariat has also concluded a memorandum of cooperation with the Ramsar Convention on wetlands.

53. As a cooperative activity among UNEP, World Resources Institute (WRI) and IUCN, a set of guidelines on the preparation of biodiversity strategies and action plans was prepared and global biodiversity forums were organized to assist Governments in integrating biodiversity components in improving the understanding of the role of biodiversity in sustainable development and in monitoring implementation and the reporting of progress made.

54. Many United Nations entities and non-governmental organizations have strengthened their activities on the economics of biological diversity so as to contribute to the development of economic instruments supportive of the implementation of the objectives of chapter 15 of Agenda 21 and the Convention on Biological Diversity.

VII. CHAPTER 16 OF AGENDA 21: ENVIRONMENTALLY SOUND MANAGEMENT OF BIOTECHNOLOGY

55. The Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, at its second session, decided to establish a negotiation process to develop, in the field of the safe transfer, handling and use of living modified organisms, a protocol on biosafety, specifically focusing on transboundary movement of any living modified organism resulting from modern biotechnology that may have adverse effect on the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity,

setting out for consideration, in particular, an appropriate procedure for advance informed agreement. The Conference of the Parties to the Convention also decided to establish an Open-ended Ad Hoc Group of Experts on Biosafety, which is to endeavour to complete its work in 1998. The Conference of the Parties to the Convention noted, inter alia, that guidelines on biosafety, including the proposed UNEP International Technical Guidelines on Safety in Biotechnology, may be used as an interim mechanism during the development of the protocol and to complement it after its completion, for the purposes of facilitating the development of national capacities to assess and manage risks, establish adequate information systems and develop expert human resources in biotechnology. 12/

Notes

1/ Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992, vol. I, Resolutions Adopted by the Conference (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigendum), resolution 1, annex II.

2/ See Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1995, Supplement No. 12 (E/1995/32).

3/ Ibid., 1994, Supplement No. 13 (E/1994/33/Rev.1).

4/ Ibid., 1995, Supplement No. 12 (E/1995/32), chap. I, sect. D, annex I.

5/ See United Nations Environment Programme, Convention on Biological Diversity (Environmental Law and Institutions Programme Activity Centre), June 1992.

6/ A/49/84/Add.2, annex, appendix II.

7/ Ibid., appendix III, sect. A, resolution 5/1.

8/ See Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1995, Supplement No. 12 (E/1995/32), chap. I, sect. D, para. 199.

9/ See the report of the Initial Organizing Committee of the Mountain Forum, held at Spruce Knob Mountain Center, West Virginia, United States of America, 21-25 September 1995.

10/ See Legal Instruments Embodying the Results of the Uruguay Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations, done at Marrakesh on 15 April 1994 (GATT secretariat publication, Sales No. GATT/1994-7), vols. 1 and 27-31.

11/ See the report of the second session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (unedited draft) (UNEP/CBD/COP/2/19), decision II/10.

12/ Ibid., decision II/5.